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ABSTRACT

To determine the views of evaluation held by educators in Maryland, 115 secondary teachers and 21 administrators in 6 Maryland school districts responded to a 26-item research-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire assessed the primary purposes of evaluation, the procedures used in the subjects' school systems, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the systems. Both teachers and administrators agreed that the primary goal of evaluation was improvement in the teacher's classroom performance. Chi-square analysis of the results showed significant differences between principals and teachers when evaluation was used for contract renewal or termination. There were statistically significant correlations between the number of years of teaching and willingness to participate in pre- and postobservation conferences. The worst aspects of evaluation seen by teachers were: (1) principal bias; (2) inconsistency; (3) subjectivity; and (4) focus on trivial issues. Principals wanted more time for observations. The best features of the evaluation systems were a non-threatening attitude of the principal and the use of pre- and postobservation conferences. A demographic summary of teachers and administrators, and correlations between study sample's years of experience/gender and survey questions are appended. (Author/SLD)

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TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' VIEWS OF EVALUATION:
DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' VIEWS OF EVALUATION--DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

Margaret A. Kiley¹

How do teachers and administrators view the evaluation process? A recent summary of over 100 studies on the issue revealed common agreement between teachers and their principals that effective evaluation can assure adequate classroom performance and provide an avenue for continued professional growth of the faculty.

To determine if Maryland teachers help these same perceptions of evaluation, 115 secondary teachers and 21 administrators in six Maryland school districts were surveyed concerning the primary purposes of evaluation; the specific procedures used in their respective systems, and perceived strengths and weaknesses of those systems. A 26-item research-designed questionnaire was used to collect the data. A series of t-tests, chi square and correlation analyses were used to test the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance.

Discussion

There was unanimous agreement among both groups that "improvement of the teacher's classroom performance" was the primary goal of evaluation. However, chi-square analysis of the responses showed significant differences between principals and teachers when evaluation was used for contract renewal or termination. Statistically significant correlations (at the .05 level) occurred between the number of years of teaching and/or administrative experience and willingness to participate in pre-a and post-observation conferences. Open-ended questions revealed the "worst" aspects of evaluation, as viewed by teachers, to be principal bias, inconsistency, subjectivity and "pouncing" on trivial issues (quality of bulletin boards, for example) while principals deplored the lack of time for an adequate number of observations. "Best" features were seen as a non-threatening attitude by the principal and the use of pre- and post-observation conferences.

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TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' VIEW OF EVALUATION--DIFFERING
PERSPECTIVES

My colleagues have shared with you some of the steps currently in process to assure that future teachers entering our classrooms will have demonstrated competence in their subject matter as well as a sound understanding of the psychological and sociological foundations of learning and pedagogical theories and strategies before they will be entrusted with the responsibilities of a teacher. Whether the mandates from the Carnegie Commission or The Holmes Group prove the most effective in achieving these goals can only be determined by time, but efforts are underway in countless colleges and universities throughout the country to re-assess the curriculum and the clinical experiences provided the neophyte teacher.

Admittedly, such endeavors are crucial to achieving quality education in the 21st Century, but these teachers initially entering the profession each year represent a small fraction of the total teaching force. The overwhelming majority of teachers in our classrooms are veterans, having taught for several years. In many school systems, the average teacher has been in the classroom for more than a decade. What guarantees does the community have that these teachers are competent and are doing their jobs efficiently? How good are the procedures used to evaluate these teachers who instruct hundreds of thousands of American children day after day?

Teacher evaluation and the perceptions of teachers and their administrators are the foci of the study I am reporting to you this morning. Specifically, Do teachers and administrators have the same goals for teacher evaluation? Is there common agreement as to the procedures for the evaluation process? Who should evaluate the teachers? Administrators? colleagues? subject supervisors? students? And, What do teachers and administrators see as the strengths and weaknesses of their present evaluation procedures?

Certainly all of us here today have experienced the often less-than-pleasant phenomenon known as "being evaluated." Some of you may have experienced evaluation procedures in business, government, or the military, as well as participating in the formalized rituals used in colleges and universities throughout the civilized world to evaluate their colleagues. None of us is immune from such procedures to this day, though, admittedly, those of us who have earned our academic tenure are not as troubled by evaluation as those still seeking that lofty status.

I'm sure you can think back to some "war stories" about inept and unfair evaluations you have personally experienced. The lightning-quick visit from the supervisor,

sergeant, boss, principal, department chairperson, or dean resulting in a note to "keep up the good work," or a terse comment that the venetian blinds were crooked or the handouts were too light.

And those of us who have found ourselves charged with the responsibility for evaluating others--perhaps as a supervisor or administrator--may have questioned our own ability to judge another's knowledge and skill fairly and fully. Is it truly possible to evaluate those intangibles that occur between teacher and learner in a profession some classify as "more art than craft"?

The many critics of evaluation systems--whether those in education, business, or the military--claim that the present evaluative procedures are incomplete, subjective, inadequate, cumbersome, and inconsistent, often heavily tainted by the evaluator's biases as well as "cronyism" or favoritism toward some employees by the evaluator. Such charges, to some extent, must be accepted as valid.

Yet a review of research on teacher attitudes toward evaluation over the last two decades indicate that teachers recognize and accept the need for administrative review and evaluation. A recent summary of over 100 studies on teachers' attitudes toward evaluation conducted by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development indicated teachers welcomed constructive suggestions for improvement and viewed professional growth as one of the outcomes of their evaluation.

The most recent study I located was one conducted in 1986 by the editors of Learning magazine from surveying 1,000 teachers throughout the United States, subscribers to the magazine, who voluntarily completed and returned the magazine's specially devised questionnaire. Since some of the issues covered by my study were also included in Learning's survey, specifically, Who should evaluate teacher? What was the impact of the evaluation upon the teachers?, I would like to share some of their findings as a basis for looking at my results.

Fifty-three percent of the 893 respondents indicated that their evaluations were an accurate indication of their teaching; further, evaluation had a positive effect on the

teaching of 47 percent of the respondents. However only 12 percent reported that their teaching had improved as a result of the evaluation. In almost three quarters of the evaluations (72 percent), the principal conducted the evaluation; this figure was somewhat lower than the expectation of 83 percent of the sample who indicated that the principal should be responsible for conducting the evaluation.

The issue of a conference prior to an evaluation observation was not included as one of the questionnaire items, but 96 percent of the teachers in this sample added comments recommending a conference following the evaluation, though only 81 percent reported such a conference was a part of their present evaluation. The strong positive feeling toward a post-observation conference and its value in the teacher's professional growth was substantiated by Jensen's research in 1981 which reported a survey of 46 experienced elementary and intermediate teachers. Eight-eight percent viewed such a conference positively.

Yet the administrators sampled preferred to write their reactions to their observations rather than confer with their faculty since more than three-quarters of the teachers in the Learning magazine sample reported receiving a

written report of their evaluations and almost 90 percent of them viewed receiving such a statement in a favorable light.

Almost a decade before the survey by Learning magazine, the Educational Research Service, in 1978, surveyed 1,075 school systems across the United States as to their goals for teacher evaluation, which was also one of the issues of my study. Of the fourteen items reported, the top five items were (1) to help teachers improve their performance; (2) to decide on renewal appointment of probationary teachers; (3) to recommend status for tenured teachers; (4) recommend dismissal for unsatisfactory teachers; and (5) select teachers for promotions.

In 1980, a teachers' federation in Ontario, Canada, surveyed 274 elementary teachers and administrators regarding their goals and procedures for teacher evaluation. All of the respondents (59 percent of the sample were teachers and 38 percent, administrators) concurred that the prime goal of evaluation was improved instruction and learning.

However, teachers were very critical of what they viewed as inconsistency of the administrators in rating classroom performance and the low number of observations which constituted the basis for their evaluations.

Teachers also reported that the rating scales used by their administrators often did not deal with teaching-learning variables, but rather with such items as "teacher appearance, "loyalty," and "sense of humor," and therefore could not yield accurate data upon which to evaluate their teaching performance.

Wood and Pohland's results of their study of 88 school districts in New Mexico, published in 1979, corroborated the findings of the Educational Research Service. These researchers reported that only 28 percent of criteria used by 81 percent of the school districts to evaluate teachers focused on the teaching role, while 54 percent rated personal characteristics and the "social," "professional," and "membership" roles of the teacher.

At the 1981 meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Los Angeles, Pauline Paulin reported two teacher surveys which focused on teachers' receptivity to evaluation, their perceived control over the activities being evaluated, their input into the evaluation process, and their trust in the evaluators' accuracy and expertise.

The results for both the 150 elementary and 200 secondary teachers showed that, for most domains, teachers' receptivity to evaluation was positively related to their perceived degree of control over the domain or activity being evaluated. In addition, secondary teachers were more receptive to evaluation when they felt they had greater input into evaluation decisions and reported a higher level of acceptance of evaluators' expertise.

Reservations by teachers concerning the procedures used to collect data upon which to evaluate them were also reported in 1986 by McCarty, Kaufman, and Stafford who surveyed 786 teachers in 36 school systems throughout Wisconsin. The researchers reported that teachers were evaluated on the basis of a single visit every two or three years and almost universally disdained the use of rating scales by their administrators.

Two teacher-researchers at Towson State University recently completed studies of teacher attitudes in two Maryland school systems, and it was these two that led me to continue their initial investigations. Cunningham, in 1983, with the support of the superintendent of schools, surveyed all the teachers and administrators in one of the State's smaller counties. A total of 135 of the system's 225 teachers and

all 10 principals responded. An instrument adapted from a questionnaire developed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development was used to collect opinions on the content to be used to evaluate teachers, the utilization of the information derived from the evaluation process and the procedures used to evaluate teachers.

No statistically significant differences resulted--principals and teachers agreed that the main purpose for evaluating teachers was the improvement of instruction; that lesson planning, teaching techniques and classroom management should be the basis for evaluation. Information from one of the open-ended questions asking for the "weaknesses" of the evaluation system revealed teachers' concerns about administrators' inconsistencies in evaluating; their subjectivity, bias, and the difficulty in measuring some of the items.

The second study of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of evaluation occurred in one of the State's large school systems. After securing the support of the superintendent of schools, Williams, in 1985, surveyed 144 teachers, all of the system's 89 administrators and 28 instructional supervisors as to the purposes, criteria, and procedures needed for effective teacher evaluation. Both teachers and administrators concurred that instructional

improvement should be the prime purpose of teacher evaluation, a finding which is substantiated by extensive research reaching back more than twenty years.

Williams study further corroborated the attitudes of both teachers and administrators as to the criteria to be evaluated. Both groups felt that data gathered from observations of teaching performance to achieve pre-determined goals should constitute the basis for evaluation, rather than including a rating of teachers' non-instructional duties or out-of-class professional activities.

The teachers in Williams' sample expressed reservations about the effectiveness of the instruments used by their administrators in collecting the data used for evaluating teachers, again restating concerns expressed by teachers in virtually all the research.

Inasmuch as the two studies completed by Cunningham and Williams were sanctioned by their respective superintendents, I was interested to see if an "independent" study of teachers' perceptions toward evaluation would agree with administratively supported research.

With the aid of 18 students in a graduate-level class in secondary school administration, 115 teachers and 21 administrators' from six Maryland school systems responded to 26 items on a researcher-devised questionnaire. The items included in this study had been used in earlier studies reported in the literature. The pressures of time and the lack of personnel allowed only for a field-test of teachers and administrators on the content and "face" validity but no testing could be done to establish reliability. Teachers who had recently been observed by their principals might have a far different reaction to the process than one who is basing perceptions of an evaluation which occurred a year or two ago.

Respondents answered questions on the goals of teacher evaluation evaluation, implementation procedures, and from two open-ended items, perceived strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation systems in their respective schools.

The responses were statistically analyzed using a series of t-tests, chi-square analyses and multiple correlation using the Pearson Product Moment coefficient of correlation to ascertain if significant differences occurred between the perceptions of the administrators and the teachers or if

there were any correlation between position, gender and years of teaching or administrative experience.

The open-ended responses were summarized by the researcher and those comments that appeared most often will be reported. Though no statistical comparisons could be made, the comments made these teachers or administrators may provide intriguing insights into the perceptions of the individuals involved in the process of supervision and evaluation.

A series of independent t-tests revealed no significant differences between the attitudes of the 21 administrators who responded to the survey as to the primary goals of supervision and evaluation. There was 100 percent unanimity by both male and female administrators that the chief aim of supervision and evaluation was the improvement of the teacher's performance in the classroom.

On the remaining three goals included in the survey--(a) providing a basis for contract renewal, (b) for contract termination or for (c) transfer-- both the male and female administrators showed no significant differences in their perceptions. The overwhelming majority agreed that these were all legitimate uses of their observations.

Analysis of the responses of the teachers as to goals of supervision and evaluation paralleled that of the administrators for two of the four goals. However for the goals of using evaluation to provide a basis for renewing a teacher's contract or terminating a teacher's contract, chi-square analysis of the responses of administrators and teachers disclosed significant differences between the two groups.

Teachers and administrators were in agreement that supervision should be conducted by the principal and assistant principal, but chi-square analysis showed the groups differed significantly when the department chairperson--who often is viewed by teachers as a colleague rather than an administrator--was added to the list of persons to conduct teacher observations.

Analysis of the correlational data revealed a statistically significant correlation between the number of years of teaching experience and use of observations for evaluating teaching performance, recommending contract renewal or termination. The highest correlation was reported between the use of teacher observations when a contract was not be renewed and number of years of administrative experience.

Statistically significant correlations also occurred between the number of years of teaching and/or administrative experience and willingness to participate in teacher/administrator conferences prior to--and after--the classroom observation.

Statistically significant correlations also resulted for both male and female teachers between years of teaching experience and the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the criteria used by the administrators prior to the classroom observation.

Many of the respondents who answered the open-ended questions cited the WORST features of their present supervisory/evaluative procedures as (1) inconsistency by the administrator/observer in rating certain topics; (2) too little time spent in the classroom for an comprehensive observation, (3) observer bias, or (4) "pouncing" on trivial issues, such as bulletin boards or too-light "handouts" given to students.

Kudos for the administrator/evaluators reported by those participants who completed the open-ended question on the BEST features of their present supervisory/evaluative procedures included praise for "fairness," "objectivity," "an adequate number of observations visits," and "informal and non-threatening demeanor by the principal or assistant principal."

Discussion

This study revealed few differences in perceptions about supervision and evaluation by the teachers and secondary school administrators who participated in this survey. Drawn from six Maryland school districts, one, the 20th largest school system in the United States; the other, among the State's smaller school systems, almost total consensus by the administrators and teachers sampled occurred as to the validity of observations to evaluate a teacher's classroom performance and to recommend renewal of the teacher's contract. However, significant differences arose between administrators and teachers when observations were to be used for termination of a teacher's contract or transferring the teacher to another school.

Teachers expressed concern that the criteria used by the administrators to evaluate them were not fully understood; that bias and inconsistencies by the principal or assistant principal in applying the criteria uniformly during observations of the teachers' classroom performance cast doubt upon the accuracy of the evaluation.

The Maryland teachers who participated in this sample concurred with the teachers who responded to the Learning magazine survey in their endorsement of pre- and post-conferences as potentially valuable tools in improving the quality of the classroom observations and the impact, in terms of encouraging the teacher's professional growth, of their observations.

The absence of pre- and post-conferences may be the result of too-much observing to do by the administrators and too-little time remaining--on the part of both faculty and principal--for conferring. I would like to suggest another possibility, however--a lack of confidence by BOTH administrator AND teacher in the most effective way to participate in such a conference. Each has an important role to play in the conference process, yet many reported feeling uncomfortable during such conferences, uncertain just how to begin, participate in, and end such discussions.

Administrators must accept the responsibility for improving their skills as observers, constructive critics, and mentors. Teachers must recognize their responsibility in structuring the pre-conference so that the principal has an accurate focus for the observation and demonstrate a willingness to re-examine what occurred during the class observation and to accept suggestions for improving areas that need attention.

State Departments of Education and professional associations, such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, with their leadership and staff improvement workshops; peer coaching and mentor models offer readily available means to assist administrators and teachers in ways to develop a high level of skill as equal participants--not adversaries--in the supervisory/evaluation process.

The stakes are too high to ignore the importance of utilizing the means already at hand by which administrators and their faculty can cooperatively maintain a high level of morale as they raise faculty competence. Such an atmosphere will most certain translate into schools where learning is an constant, exciting experience for all involved.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY - TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS
(N = 136)

Teachers	Years of Experience				
	Under 3	4-10	10-20	Over 20	Total
Male	3	13	20	10	46
Female	10	24	32	3	69
Total	13	37	52	13	115

Administrators	Years of Experience				
	Under 3	4-10	10-20	Over 20	Total
Male	1	5	7	3	16
Female	0	1	0	4	5
Total	1	6	7	7	21

APPENDIX B

CORRELATION BETWEEN

YEARS OF TEACHING QUES 1 GOAL, TEACHER PERFORMANCE

sig. -.0214

r = .403

YEARS OF TEACHING QUES 2, GOAL RENEWAL

sig. -.0952

r = .250

YEARS OF EXP AS ADMIN ... QUES 3, GOAL TERMINATION

sig. .0059

r = .490

YEARS OF TEACHING QUES 8, SUPERVISED BY ASST PRIN

sig. .0547

r = .270

YEARS AS AN ADMIN QUES 11, EVALUATED BY PEERS

sig. .0443

r = .422

YEARS OF TEACHING SHOULD HOLD PRE-CONFERENCE, QUES. 14

sig. .0538

r = .257

YEARS OF TEACHING PRE-CONFERENCE IS HELD, QUES. 15

sig. .0166

r = .428

YEARS OF TEACHING PRE-CONFERENCE IS VALUABLE, QUES. 16

sig. .0423

r = .327

YEARS OF TEACHING CRITERIA CLEAR, QUES 17

sig. .0062

r = .473

GENDER POST-CONFERENCE VALUABLE, QUES 23

sig. .0569

r = .258

YEARS OF TEACHING POST-CONFERENCE VALUABLE, QUES 23

sig. .0579

r = .256